

**Caucus of Conveners Learning Series:  
Employer Engagement and Employer Impact**

Wednesday, January 26, 2011

10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Videoconference Sites (local DVR and Technical Colleges)

---

**Welcome, Videoconference Etiquette & Introductions**

---

Attendance by videoconference site:

**DWD-Madison:** Anne Rodgers-Rhyme, DWD, Laura Dresser, COWS, Linda Preysz, DWD, Sigrid Peterson, COWS, Sharon Berge, DWD, Rachel Witthoft, DWD, Steve Roberts, DWD, Rita Black-Radloff, DWD, Willa Panzer, WTCS

**DVR Wausau:** Doris McAllister, North Central WDB, Diane Weiler, North Central WDB

**Northeast WI Technical College-Green Bay :**Ann Franz, Northeast WI TC

**DVR Eau Claire:** Renee Surdick, UW-Stout, Tim Shepardson, Chippewa Valley TC

**DVR La Crosse:** Patti Balacek, Western TC

**MATC-Milwaukee:** Leslie Spencer-Herrera, MAWIB, Joe Nicosia, WRTP, Bob Bergmann, WRTP, Leah Ganjbackhsh, WRTP, Sam McGovern-Rowen, NSCDC, Norma Gaines, MAHA, Michelle St. Clair, WOW, Paula Kenenakhone, MAWIB

**WDB of South Central WI-Madison:** Seth Lentz, WDB-SCW, Pat Schramm, WDB-SCW, Erin Legro, WDB-SCW

**Nicolet Technical College-Rhineland:** Sandy Bishop, Nicolet TC

**Importance of Demonstrating Quality of Employer Engagement and Employer Impact**

---

*Laura Dresser, COWS*

The focus of this meeting is to discuss strategies to (1) demonstrate that industry partnerships (IP) are solving problems for business and workers and that we have a list of employers to keep this initiative going, (2) ensure it remains important and is funded in the state, and (3) continue to improve employer support and buy-in in these next months.

*Update on DWD Industry Partnerships Project Numbers—Rachel Witthoft, DWD*

- DWD has awarded 21 training grants (18 active) for a total of \$5,325,388 dispersed. Currently, 1050 incumbent and dislocated workers have been trained (Total proposed trained is 3308 by the end of all grants)
- DWD has awarded 25 convening grants (14 active) for a total of \$574,612 dispersed.
- All of the IP grant funds (total of \$5,900,000) have been dispersed.

## **Strategies for Strengthening Employer Involvement**

---

*Question: What are some of the key insights you have on employer engagement?*

### Theme: Employer Challenges

- Keep employers engaged by determining solid strategies and work plan instead of just meeting fruitlessly. Set goals and objectives to prove that “this has value.”
- With new partnership, we often start with owners, but need to continuously evaluate who else deeper in the business/organization may be a good fit with the partnership.
- Know companies one-on-one from the plant manager down to production employees
- Establish an employer champion.
- Make sure we are doing work that matters to the employers and it is the employers’ group project, not ours.
- Consider relationships that already exist between employers, tech colleges/training partners, and related organization as a result of other previous or ongoing initiatives—may be able to build off of this structure and trust.
- Network—market yourself and get involved in events employers invite you to.

### Theme: Convening Logistics

- Be aware of geographical barriers—this is where videoconferencing and other technology is useful.
- Make it easy and efficient for companies to participate. The behind-the-scenes work we do is important—meeting logistics, note taking, email meeting reminders, bringing other resources to the table,
- Purposeful communications – agenda must be clear and need articulated decision points so everyone is on the same page. Getting this information out in a timely manner is important because people need time to prepare, especially if they need to consult with higher-ups.
- Periodic follow-ups—see a correlation between training and employees. If you lose contact with an employer, it is hard to start over and get them back on board.

### Theme: Training Issues

- Need to make it easy for students to participate in training – if there is one barrier that crops up, people drop out because “that’s just another ‘government’ thing.”
- Strategy – figure out what companies need (e.g. a few want MSSC certified, others particularly interested in blue print reading, not everyone is interested in Certificate program). Figuring out what they need helps us approach companies differently.
- Get the companies committed by promoting their active involvement in the training process (e.g. employers becoming adjunct instructors in MSSC and blueprint reading, employers serving as guest speakers in tech math courses, industry tours for courses, students/workers sitting in on safety meetings at company locations).

*Participant Question: What are suggestions as to how folks manage the outcomes of meetings in a timely manner when you are the one person convening?*

- A good communications system is essential.
- The partnership is about more than a single agency and needs to see that there is more than one public resource being mobilized for them. Logistically it can be difficult but people need to feel responsible for the partnership and this work is shared.

- Have realistic outcomes— can't do everything. We decide on 3-4 key things we want to get done each year and develop a bullet by bullet work plan to get these things done.

*Question: It was brought up that some are using employer advocates to help recruit or continually develop the partnership. Are others using this strategy? How often are you taking people to other employers?*

- Business champions can do marketing within their own company to get them more involved. But need to bring in the decision makers in the company. We assist the champion to make sure there is good communication with employers.
- Fellow employers recruit their business colleagues to the IP.
- We engage with other associations in the sector.
- Connect with the regional economic development group to identify their champions and understand their priorities. They have sectors around manufacturing, small business, and more – you can identify industry leaders by who is involved already.

*Question: Some have said they see the labor market and manufacturing picking up. As an informal survey, can folks talk about if they are hearing similar things?*

- Joe Nicosia—we have Milwaukee area employers picking up. One is doing pre-employment training for 18 CNC operators and is going to follow up with second class, expanding by 60 more employees.
- Sam McGovern-Rowen—we are seeing a little bit of both: ZZB is expanding; DRS is doing electronics for Marinette marine.
- Michelle St. Clair—several smaller manufacturers reduced hours during recession to avoid laying off, but today everyone working overtime and hiring new people.
- Leah Ganjbackhsh—Masterlock is bringing back jobs from China! Reversing a trend: 3 dozen folks off layoff, starting another shift, and hiring more folks.
- Sandy Bishop—our manufacturing has remained fairly stable; defense contractors are getting new contracts and paper mills are hiring. Lack of skilled labor force is biggest challenge.
- Ann Franz—Marine Alliance seeing positive things as well: Marinette Marine is looking to hire 1000 for the Navy contract and all suppliers will also have an increase in work.
- Renee Surdick—in surveys, we are seeing an increase in sales, increase in adding employees, and increase in retaining employees. Also seeing employees moving back into large plant closures.

### **Round Robin on Assessing Employer Impact**

---

*Question: How do you assess the impact of the IP on employers in your project?*

Theme: Use of surveys or other evaluation tools post-services

- Follow up with employees after 6 months to look at application of knowledge, promotions, raises, how it changed the individual, and case studies of employees that were previously unemployed.
- Do employer satisfaction surveys; post-services/training surveys
- Use Tech College System economic development impact survey to every employer which measures the financial impact of reasons why they did it. Although it was developed as at tech college system tool, it works for IP as well.

- Look to see if enrollments in tech college programs and after-school high school program are increasing in field of manufacturing

Theme: Reaching out to youth and parents (pipeline building)

- Use YouTube-style videos made by youth featuring advanced manufacturing. Youth that watch these go back to their parents and talk about what they have seen.
- Developed a web site aimed at middle school youth that looks at modern manufacturing careers showing through video that “manufacturing is cool”
- We are thinking about pipeline and getting folks interested in health care. We also need to make sure employee-parents are changing the rhetoric to their kids.
- Surveyed tech college students in manufacturing trades-related programming to ask why they became interested in manufacturing—they were interested in a job where they could be creative and use technology.

### State Evaluation Planning 2011, Wrap-Up & Next Steps

---

Over next month or so DWD and COWS want to learn about what is already being done in terms of evaluation among the IPs and use this information to come up with 2-3 standard questions that everyone could ask employers at a specified point in a program. We will be in touch with conveners to hear more about your project, collect information from you about the data you are gathering, and discuss whether you are interested in working with us on employer impact.

We need this critical data on employer satisfaction to convince the new administration to keep supporting IP. The examples where employers are bringing back workers, expanding, and hiring new workers, essentially the examples where training is connecting to the expansion of jobs in the state, are MOST IMPORTANT.

#### *Upcoming Events*

- **March 2—IP Academy Workshop with national speakers**  
Stacey Jarrett Wagner, The JarrettWagner Group, LLC  
[www.jarrettwagnergroup.com](http://www.jarrettwagnergroup.com)

Stephen Herzenberg, Keystone Research Center  
[www.keystoneresearch.org](http://www.keystoneresearch.org)

- **April 13—next Caucus of Conveners videoconference**

*Closing comments (satisfaction with this Convener Network, what can we do differently/ better?)*

Overall comments were positive about the discussion questions, the evaluation project, and the use of the videoconference technology. Closing participant suggestion—the creation of a central repository for success stories because we could all benefit from these successes in our regions.

**Meeting adjourned 12:00 p.m.**